

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 PM-03 DODE-00 L-02 SPC-01 PRS-01 DRC-01

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R 072135Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6155

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 0477

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ES, HO, CS

SUBJECT: HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR DISPUTE

1. FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF PRESIDENT FIGUERES' ACCOUNT OF THE BACKGROUND TO THE NOW POSTPONED CA PRESIDENTIAL MEETING ON THE HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR PROBLEM WHICH HE GAVE ME IN A CONVERSATION FEBRUARY 6:

2. SOMETIME IN MID-JANUARY, GENERAL SOMOZA CALLED HIM AND ASKED HIM TO COME TO A THREE-DAY MEETING OF THE FIVE PRESIDENTS TO WORK OUT A SOLUTION TO THE DISPUTE. FIGUERES SAID HE WAS HAPPY TO ACCEPT. HE OBSERVED PARENTHETICALLY THAT HE HAS DELIBERATELY KEPT A LOW PROFILE IN THIS MATTER BECAUSE HE HAS FELT THAT BOTH ARANA AND SOMOZA PREFERRED TO TRY TO WORK IT OUT THEMSELVES. HE SAID HE ALSO KNOWS THAT ARANA DOES NOT PARTICULARLY

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LIKE HIM AND THINKS HE IS A COMMUNIST. IN ANY

CASE, HE IS HAPPY TO HELP IF HE CAN CONTRIBUTE. FOR THAT REASON HE ACCEPTED THE INVITATION FOR THE MEETING, WHOSE DATES WERE SET AT FEBRUARY 8-11, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT QUITE SEE WHY THREE DAYS WERE REQUIRED.

3. LAST WEEK PRESIDENT LOPEZ CALLED TO FIND OUT IF HE COULD COME TO SEE FIGUERES. HE VISITED FIGUERES JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 1. FIGUERES SAID THAT BEFORE LOPEZ' ARRIVAL, SOMOZA CALLED HIM AND ASKED HIM TO STIFFEN LOPEZ' BACKBONE BECAUSE HE THOUGHT LOPEZ WANTED TO BACK OUT OF THE MEETING. THIS, HE SAID, HE TRIED TO DO. LOPEZ SAID HE HAD COME TO FIND OUT WHAT THE PRESIDENTIAL MEETING WAS SUPPOSED TO DO, TO WHICH FIGUERES REPLIED THAT HE HAD HOPED LOPEZ WAS GOING TO TELL HIM. BASICALLY, HE SAID, LOPEZ WAS NERVOUS AND WANTED TO BE SURE THAT THE HONDURAN VIEW WAS UNDERSTOOD. HE PROFESSED TO WANT TO SETTLE THE PROBLEM, ALTHOUGH HE HAD INTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT. FIGUERES SAID THAT HE SPENT A LONG TIME ARGUING THAT BOTH LOPEZ AND MOLINA SIMPLY HAD TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO MAKE A DECISION. IF THEY WERE CONSTANTLY WORRIED ABOUT PLACATING THIS OR THAT GROUP, NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN. WHEN THEY DECIDED WHAT THEY THINK IS RIGHT, THEY SHOULD DO IT EVEN IF IT RISKED BEING THROWN OUT OF OFFICE OR BEING KILLED. HE URGED LOPEZ TO SHOW THAT KIND OF COURAGE, AND SAID THAT HE WOULD TELL MOLINA THE SAME THING. LOPEZ HAD TOLD HIM THAT MILITARY OFFICERS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES' ARMED FORCES MET IN SAN JOSE AND THAT SOME PROGRESS WAS MADE. FIGUERES DID NOT SAY WHETHER HE DISCUSSED ANY SPECIFIC FORMULAE WITH LOPEZ.

4. AFTER THE LOPEZ MEETING, FIGUERES CALLED MOLINA AND INVITED HIM TO COME TO SANTA CRUZ IN GUANACASTE (AS A LOCATION WHICH WOULD AVOID CONFIDENTIAL

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FIGUERES' NEED TO ASK PERMISSION TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY) AND HE WOULD BRIEF HIM ON THE LOPEZ VISIT. MOLINA SAID HE WOULD CALL HIM BACK AND LET HIM KNOW. ON FEBRUARY 4 MOLINA CALLED TO SAY HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BEST IF EVERYTHING, INCLUDING THE 5-PRESIDENTS MEETING, WERE POSTPONED FOR 30 DAYS, PLEADING THE PROBLEM OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS AND NOTING THAT ARANA ALSO HAD

AN ELECTORAL SITUATION. HE SAID THAT BOTH MOLINA AND SOMOZA FELT THAT FACIO LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG BY REVEALING PUBLICLY THAT A MEETING WAS TO BE HELD AND THAT THIS PUBLIC REVELATION HAMPERED MOLINA'S CAPACITY TO MEET. FIGUERES SAID THAT HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND HOW MOLINA OR SOMOZA COULD EVER HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE MEETING WOULD REMAIN SECRET, IF ONLY BECAUSE HE (FIGUERES) WOULD HAVE HAD TO ASK CONGRESSIONAL PERMISSION TO GO TO NICARAGUA. HE IMPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT THE PUBLICITY CHARGE A RATIONALIZATION OF SOMETHING ELSE, POSSIBLY A LACK OF CONSENSUS AS TO WHAT OUGHT TO HAPPEN IN SUCH A MEETING AND PERHAPS EVEN AS TO HIS (FIGUERES') ROLE.

5. FIGUERES DISGRESSED TO OBSERVE THAT EARLIER HE FELT HONDURAN PRESIDENT CRUZ WAS THE IMPEDIMENT TO A SOLUTION GIVEN HIS LEGALISTIC OBSESSIONS. NOW HE THINKS IT IS A SMALL GROUP OF SALVADORAN MILITARY, THE MEDRANISTAS, WHO HE BELIEVES SIMPLY SABOTAGE EVERY EFFORT TO MOVE TO A SOLUTION. THEY APPARENTLY WANT NO SETTLEMENT, AND THEY HAVE THE SUPPORT, FIGUERES BELIEVES, OF A SIMILAR GROUP OF GUATEMALAN MILITARY.

6. FIGUERES MUSED THAT PERHAPS A BROADER SOLUTION MIGHT BE SOUGHT BURYING THE BORDER QUESTION WITHIN IT. HE WAS PREPARED, HE SAID, TO GO TO THE MEETING IF IT IS HELD NEXT MONTH. HE ADDED THAT HE KNEW THE CONSTRAINTS ON US INVOLVEMENT IN THE DISPUTE, BUT HE THOUGHT THERE MIGHT WELL BE A ROLE FOR

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THE US IN CATALYTIC ACTION.
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